

Erie County is home to the city of Buffalo, New York, the second largest city in the state. Buffalo is known for its rich history and culture, lively arts scene, and excellent food. In the early 1900s, it boasted the world's largest grain and livestock markets as well as a major rail center and was known as the "Gateway to the Midwest." *USA Today* named Buffalo the winner of its 2001 "City with a Heart" contest, based on a reader poll in which dozens of Buffalonians wrote in with anecdotes illustrating why their hometown is the nation's "friendliest city." Buffalo has been known since the early 20th century as "the City of Good Neighbors."

Erie County offers residents and visitors alike a wide variety of waterways, museums, sporting events, arts, culture, and history to explore and enjoy.

Erie County embraces many beautiful and functional bodies of water. Proposed in 1808 and completed in 1825, the historic Erie Canal links the waters of Lake Erie in the west to the Hudson River in the east. Situated on the banks of Lake Erie and within an hour's drive of Lake Ontario, Buffalo is a true "waterfront city." The Buffalo waterfront hosts the [Buffalo Naval and Military Park](#) and many fine shops and restaurants. Throughout history, several US Navy ships have been named USS *Buffalo* in honor of the city.

Over 80 percent of all U.S.-Canada trade occurs via border crossings in the eastern United States. With three bridges to Canada, the Buffalo area is one of the key eastern border-crossing locations. In 1993 and 1995, *World Trade Magazine* named Buffalo one of the Top Ten U.S. Cities for international trade.

Education

The flagship university in the SUNY-System and the largest public university in New York State, the [University at Buffalo](#) (UB) lies at the heart of a rich and diverse educational community. Western New York's 30 higher-education institutions attract over 100,000 college students per year. Other area educational institutions include Buffalo State College, Canisius College, and Erie Community College.

Arts & Entertainment

As the first city in the nation to have electric streetlights, Buffalo has a longstanding reputation as the "City of Light." The nickname is just as appropriate in a figurative sense: Buffalo arts are consistently in the limelight, attracting national and international attention. Buffalo is home to the [Albright-Knox Gallery](#), housing one of the world's finest collections of modern painting and sculpture. UB recently acquired the Anderson Gallery, which Art News has hailed as "a shrine to a world-class collection of contemporary art." The nationally renowned

[Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra](#)

performs in Kleinhans Music Hall. Designed by the famed Finnish father-and-son team, Eliel and Eero Saarinen, Kleinhans itself is widely admired both for its acoustic qualities and for its architectural beauty. The theater district in downtown Buffalo offers New York State's richest and most extensive network of theaters outside of New York City. There is something for every theater lover in Buffalo, from the lavish operas, musicals, and ballets at the ornate

[Shea's Performing Arts Center](#)

, to contemporary Broadway shows at

[Studio Arena Theater](#)

. Shakespeare enthusiasts can also enjoy the Bard's work within Buffalo's city limits at "

[Shakespeare in Delaware Park](#)

," a free, open-air, seasonal production.

The official opening of the Buffalo theatre season is highlighted by dining, dancing and live theatrical performances, otherwise known as Curtain Up! Studio Arena's Managing Director, Michael Pietek, started the initial outdoor opening on Friday, Sept. 21, 1982. Curtain Up! was met with an enthusiastic response. It has since grown in scope to include theatres outside the boundaries of downtown Buffalo's Theatre District. Curtain Up! is believed to be the first - and only - event of its kind in the United States.

Buffalo has been home to many literary figures, including Mark Twain and F. Scott Fitzgerald -- and more recently, Lauren Belfer, author of the acclaimed historical novel City of Light, a portrait of Buffalo at the turn of the century. Other Erie County attractions include the [Buffalo Zoo](#) (third oldest zoo in the United States), the Roycroft Campus in East Aurora,

[Our Lady of Victory Basilica](#)

in Lackawanna, the

[Kazoo Factory](#)

in Eden,

[Buckhorn Island State Park](#)

in Grand Island and the

[Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve](#)

in Cheektowaga.

Architecture & History

Buffalo continues to be famous for its architectural beauty. From its magnificent Art-Deco City Hall building, built in 1931, to its hundreds of lovingly restored Victorian homes, Buffalo is home to a myriad of architectural treasures. The Cargill Grain Elevator, one of the most impressive sights on Buffalo's waterfront, is one of the most famous of what is often termed the nation's best collection of historic grain elevators.

Five [Frank Lloyd Wright](#) houses are located within the city of Buffalo, as well as many gems designed by H.H. Richardson, D.H. Burnham, and Louis Sullivan -- including his 1896 Guaranty Building, which remains one of the world's most stunning skyscrapers. Buffalo is also home to some famous works by noted architect Frederick Law Olmstead.

The Allentown district in downtown Buffalo -- one of three Buffalo areas listed on the National Register of Historic Places -- is crammed with antique shops, boutiques, cafes, and Victorian homes.

Immediately adjacent to Allentown is Delaware Avenue, familiarly known as "Millionaire's Row," where the headquarters of many of Buffalo's major businesses and civic institutions are centered today. However, Buffalo's rich history extends back long before the turn of the century.

Buffalo was a major stopping point on the [Underground Railroad](#) : the Niagara River was a primary route used by fugitive slaves en route to Canada, and many existing buildings in Buffalo have been identified as safe houses and stations that sheltered fleeing former slaves. After hiding at the Michigan Avenue Baptist Church, the slaves would take a ferry to Fort Erie, Canada, and to their freedom.

Efforts have begun by the Central Terminal Restoration Corporation to repair one of this grand old edifice with the primary focus on restoration and preservation of this landmark site.

Several U.S. presidents are connected to Buffalo history. [Millard Fillmore](#) took up residence in Buffalo in 1822 before he became president.

[Grover Cleveland](#)

lived in Buffalo from 1854 until 1882, and was mayor of the city. Sitting President [William McKinley](#) was shot on Sept. 5, 1901 at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, and died in Buffalo on Sept. 14. Our 26th President, [Theodore Roosevelt](#), was inaugurated in the Wilcox Mansion following the assassination of President McKinley. The Mansion on Delaware Street in Buffalo is now home to the [Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site](#).

[Forest Lawn Cemetery](#) is set in the heart of Buffalo on 270 acres of hills, lakes and streams. Established in 1849, the cemetery is the burial site of President Millard Fillmore; Seneca Indian orator Red Jacket; and Pony Express partner William D. Fargo. The site is well appreciated for its abundance of wildlife in the center of an urban landscape. "Sunday in the Cemetery" motor coach and walking tours are available to better appreciate its history.

Recreation

Delaware Park -- designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, architect of New York City's Central Park -- is the recreational heart of the city: a mecca for joggers, cross-country skiers, tennis players, softball teams, and dog-walkers alike. Skiing can also be enjoyed at the nearby ski resort of Kissing Bridge.

Buffalo's culinary offerings go well beyond its world-famous Buffalo wings. However, if visitors are interested in trying some wings, they may go to the Anchor Bar, where they debuted almost forty years ago, or nearly every other bar and restaurant in town. At the annual "[Taste of Buffalo](#)" festival, held downtown every July, thousands of Buffalo residents and visitors crowd downtown streets to enjoy samples of some of the city's finest cuisine, from dozens of local restaurants.

A street festival takes place nearly every weekend from May through September, including ethnic celebrations like the Hellenic Festival in June, the International Canadian/American Friendship Festival celebrated every July, and the Allentown Art Festival, where over 500 local artists display their work to crowds of several hundred thousand.

Weekdays are just as lively in the summer as weekends: thousands of Buffalonians of every

age and walk of life throng to downtown's Lafayette Square on Thursday afternoons in the summer to enjoy free live musical entertainment at the "Thursdays-in-the-Square" series sponsored by the city.

Established in 1888, the [Broadway Market](#) is the oldest indoor market in the United States. The market features old-world butcher shops and bakeries, ethnic food vendors, candy shops, and restaurants.

Climate

While most famous for its winters, Buffalo boasts four distinct seasons, each remarkable in its own right. With a pleasant, temperate climate, and the "highest percentage of summer sunshine of any region in New York State," Buffalo's spring and summer months richly deserve the widespread recognition its winters have attracted.